



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
RECLAMATION & ENFORCEMENT

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OSM SIGNS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH DUCKS UNLIMITED TO SUPPORT WETLANDS INITIATIVE

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan announced today that the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) and Ducks Unlimited, Inc., will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in support of the Bush Administration's "no net loss" of wetlands objective.

"This agreement will help us protect and extend the kind of wetland habitat that attracts and sustains diverse waterfowl species, a major environmental goal," Lujan said.

OSM Director Harry M. Snyder and Ducks Unlimited Executive Vice President Matthew B. Connolly, Jr., will sign the MOU at a ceremony at the Interior Department, 1849 C Street N.W., Wednesday, January 23, at 2 p.m.

Snyder said the agreement will help focus attention on wetland environments as an environmental plus in and near coal-producing areas. "Surface mine reclamation doesn't have to be all forest or all grassland," he said. "There is plenty of room for wetland reclamation, a goal that we welcome Ducks Unlimited's help in advancing."

The MOU stresses cooperative activities to preserve and create wetlands, including waterfowl habitats, as a legitimate post-mining use on reclaimed coal mine sites regulated under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. Additionally, the MOU pledges support for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan to conserve waterfowl habitats in the United States and Canada, and to promote wetlands education for the coal industry, private associations, and State agencies.

Both OSM and Ducks Unlimited have been leaders in supporting the conservation and creation of wetlands. The 1989 OSM Director's Award for coal mine reclamation was awarded to the Illinois Division of Peabody Coal Company for turning the abandoned Will Scarlett Mine in southern Illinois into an 8,000-acre wetland area which supports a resident Canada goose population and provides winter refuge for thousands of migrating waterfowl. Under carefully controlled conditions, OSM also supports experimental practices at commercial surface coal mining and reclamation operations aimed at creating biologically diverse wetland habitat as a viable reclamation alternative.

OSM joins two other Interior Department agencies, the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service, which previously signed similar MOUs with Ducks Unlimited.